

Red Red Rose

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Summary: The story of Bobbie and Stefan's romance in the 70's leading to Caroline

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"Every little girl knows about love. It is only her capacity to suffer because of it that increases." - Francoise Sagan

Florida, 1974

"Barbara Jean!" Luke Spencer's loud, excited voice floated through the rusted dilapidated old house. "I'm home baby!"

"Luke be quiet!" Bobbie scolded her eyes large and reproachful. She stepped out of her room at the top of the steps and looked at Luke sternly. "Some girls are workingâ€|"

"Well they're not making enough noise if that's what they're doing!" Luke called out as he raced to the top of the stairs to stand in front of his fifteen-year old sister. He placed his hands on his hips and pouted, "What no hug?"

"Come here you," Bobbie giggled, giving her brother his hug. She pulled back and led him into her room, the only private place in the entire building. "So tell me where you've been."

"Here there everywhere," Luke said vaguely. "What have you been doing?"

"This one that one everyone," Bobbie joked back.

Luke let a guilty gaze settle on his sister. Her smiling face and glib attitude was like a knife through his heart. He cleared his throat and said reluctantly, "You shouldn't make a joke of it Barbara Jeanâ€¦"

Bobbie turned to her brother indignantly, her hands on her hips. "Who in the hell are you to tell me what to joke about. You disappear and leave me here for months! You don't see what I have to do to have food Luke! You haven't been here!"

"I didn't mean to get you angry," Luke whispered, hoping to calm her down a bit. He glanced at her sparse, small frame. Some aspects of her may have already been quite womanly, but she was skinny as a rail. She obviously wasn't getting enough food.

> "Well maybe you should think before you say things like that to me," Bobbie said in a low voice. "This is hell Luke! And I have to do something to live in it, and if that means cracking the occasional joke, you will listenâ€¦"<p>

"And I'll even laugh if you want me to," Luke quickly interrupted. He handed his sister a handful of bills. "I'm sorry Barbara Jean."

"Where did you get all this?" Bobbie's jaw dropped as she counted the money quickly. "Luke this has got to be over a hundred dollarsâ€¦"

"It's from my new job," Luke proudly announced.

"What do you do rob banks for a living now?" Bobbie asked cautiously.

"We do not rob banks," Luke said seriously. He took a deep breath before saying quickly, "I started to make runs for Frank Smith."

"NO!" Bobbie practically yelled. "Come on Luke, that's not the way to go with this."

"If I can pimp my baby sister out," Luke cringed inwardly as the words rolled off of his tongue effortlessly. "Well I'll be damned if I can't put myself in the fire too."

"I don't want you involved with the mob Luke," Bobbie pleaded. "I can make enough money for the both of us."

"You can make enough money for the both of us to barely survive," Luke corrected. "I can make enough for the both of us to LIVE."

"Take your money damn it, and go live!" Bobbie mocked, throwing the money towards him.

"Bobbie, there's no arguing with me on this, let me pamper you a little," Luke said quietly and seriously before grinning, "And I got you a great job for tonight."

"If it has to do with the mob I don't want it," Bobbie snapped.

"It's got nothing to do with the mob," Luke lied. This guy was part of one of the upper ring of command, with a thing for red heads. "Rich, powerful, hopefully handsome."

Luke placed the money in Bobbie's hand. "Go buy yourself a dress and whatever else your womanly self may need. Make a good impression tonight, it just may be our ticket to the high rode."

A classy restaurant in Florida

"Love is not blind, it sees more not less; But because it sees more it chooses to see less." - _ Unknown

"Smile pretty baby," Jimmy purred as he led Bobbie into the restaurant. "I've got some of the home town people to impress."

Bobbie groaned inwardly before smiling pretty to everyone in the restaurant. She had never been an actual escort before; she usually just gave the johns what they wanted and then cried herself to sleep. This guy wanted to show her off to the hometown. Bobbie couldn't help but wonder how she was supposed to impress anyone. She was a fifteen year old hooker, not something to really brag to the parents about.

"Later we'll go have some fun," Jimmy assured her.

"Great," Bobbie said, feigning enthusiasm. She was going to kill Luke. This guy had the mob written all over him, from his beefy look to the outline of the gun harness coming through his suit jacket.

"Man is all that hair really yours?" Jimmy asked quietly in Bobbie's ear as he clumsily stroked the mass of red curls that fell down Bobbie's back.

'This must be his idea of wooing and foreplay,' Bobbie thought before nodding prettily.

Time couldn't be moving slower for her at that moment.

Meanwhile at another table, a newly sixteen year old Stefan Cassadine sipped the vodka shot with distaste. His brother and father laughed heartily at the look of disgust that crossed his face.

"Really boy you must learn about the finer things in life," Mikkos scolded lightly.

"Women, liquor, good food and power," Stavros listed happily, taking his shot of Vodka straight down.

"Women!" Mikkos bellowed. "We must find you women!"

"Father I do not wish to find women," Stefan said quickly, looking around at the Americans with embarrassment, hoping no one would take offense at his father's raucous behavior.

He glimpses a young red head, sitting at a table with her chin cupped

in one hand. Her other delicate hand drew small circles on the table top, a look of pure disinterest playing upon her delicate features as the man she was with droned on. She was dressed in a light green dress that played on her olive skin and flame red curls. She was beautiful and enchanting and at the same time strangely lonely and sad.

"I see you have found something of interest," Mikkos interrupted Stefan's musings, following his gaze. "She's a titian beauty, although quite young."

Stefan broke his gaze away from the girl and looked down at the counter top, he knew all too well what was coming next.

"I shall buy her as a gift for you," Mikkos announced happily. "You shall become a man tonight my boy."

"Finally?" Stavros joked. "My little brother shall stay a womanly boy foreverâ€|"

"I do not wish for you to buy me anything," Stefan said quietly, his face becoming red once more.

"I won't have this dallying around," Mikkos said sternly. "It's about time that you stop acting like a child and prepare yourself for life as a true Cassadineâ€|"

"Please excuse me," Stefan muttered, rising from the table silently. His father's booming voice was steadily embarrassing him and he felt the need to get away.

"There is something wrong with that boy," Mikkos sighed, looking forlornly at Stavros after his youngest son left.

"He is entirely too romantic, that's all," Stavros excused his brother. "I can't see where he gets it from though."

"There was once a time when your mother was a romantic as well," Mikkos revealed with a smile. "You would never think of it now howeverâ€|"

"I believe you've had enough of this horrendous American Vodka," Stavros laughed, pulling the bottle away from his father.

Meanwhile Stefan sneaked his way outside, needing the fresh air. He thought he would explode in that restaurant under his father's amused scrutiny. He never really enjoyed being around his father, but it was infinitely better than being with his mother. What he truly wanted to do was just hide himself in the hills of the Cassadine compound, perhaps sharing a conversation with little Alexis or possibly even his brother. But when he could never please either of his parents, and he dreaded being around them almost as much as he knew they did.

Stefan inhaled the sweet, warm scent of Florida. It was perpetually summer in this place. America was truly a very vulgar place, but he envied them for the dramatic climates and occasional pretty scenery.

Like the sunset he was looking at right nowâ€|there were the most

amazing hues of purple, orange, yellow and red soaking into the tall buildings of the horizon. Past those buildings one could glimpse the ocean, with the white light playing off of the deep blue waves. Stefan realized he would love to swim in those waters, although he hated swimming. There was something strangely provocative and exotic about those waters.

Stefan took a deep breath, soaking in the amazingly beautiful sunset, then turned to go back into the restaurant. His entrance was delayed however by a blur of a woman storming out of the restaurant, slamming the door on an approaching, burly man.

"Excuse me," Stefan said quietly, stepping away from the girl from a moment, his eye catching on those red hanging curls.

"It's fine," Bobbie mumbled, looking warily at the door. She looked back at the man she had just run into. He was more of a boy really, with sandy blond hair dangerously close to falling into his eyes, and what eyes. Squinting blue orbs that were blatantly staring at her. Bobbie's angry stance faltered for a second as she said shyly, "I should be sorry, for running into you like that."

"It is not a problem," Stefan assured her gently.

"You stupid little bitch!" a male voice boomed from the door that Bobbie had just slammed. Jimmy stood there, holding his hand gently, the hand that was presumably smashed into the door when Bobbie made her exit.

Bobbie stepped back and her entire face contorted in fear. Just as quickly as it appeared however, she replaced it with a look of utter defiance, standing before the man that was twice her age and at least three times her size.

"What do you think you're doing, running out on me like that? You embarrassed me!" Jimmy growled, oblivious to Stefan's presence.

"You embarrassed yourself!" Bobbie corrected. "I'm not into that kind of thing! So go find yourself another girl."

"It's just a little something to get you high baby," Jimmy muttered angrily. "If I would have known you were so stuck up about shit like that I wouldn't have said yes."

"Stuck up? Well I guess if not liking someone taking out the cocaine in the middle of a restaurant is stuck up, then I'm stuck up," Bobbie laughed bitterly, her dark eyes blazing. She looked around, embarrassed to have caused such a scene. She started to walk away, shaking her head, "I'm out of here!"

Jimmy and Stefan stood out in front of the restaurant in Bobbie's wake. Stefan was bewildered on all counts, whereas Jimmy's blood was boiling over every extra second he stood there.

"I'm getting my money's worth from that damn whore," Jimmy muttered. He began to walk casually, but quickly in the direction Bobbie had just torn off in.

Stefan stood there a moment longer, thinking that this was certainly none of his business. But the girl's look of fear when Jimmy first

came out of the restaurant haunted him. She was in an extremely dangerous position, and the white knight romantic that inhabited Stefan perpetually could not resist. He soon stalked off in the same direction as the girl hoping he could be in time.

Streets of Florida

Bobbie turned a corner blindly, not knowing what direction she was going in exactly. She knew however that she had to put as much distance in between herself and Jimmy as humanly possible. He had already gotten too high to be humane, and she had rashly gotten him angry.

"Where in the hell am I?" Bobbie muttered, wrapping her arms around herself when a cool, nighttime breeze blew by. The sun had already sunk into the horizon and the darkness was growing exponentially. The thin green dress was stylish and fairly expensive, but it did nothing to keep her warm.

She glanced around again, the entire street was deserted. There wasn't any noise really except for a phone ringing in a dark house. She expelled a breath and glanced behind her, nothing to be seen. She felt safe for a moment, and began to walk again along the dark streets.

A hand reached out to grab her in the darkness, jerking her body violently from the path it wanted to travel. Bobbie froze in fear, she couldn't move at all. She tried to shout or say something but the only sound that came out of her mouth was a dry squeak. She could feel her body being dragged into an alleyway. She could even feel the pain course through her when her body was thrown against the brick wall.

She crumpled into a heap on the ground, letting out a small wail of pain.

"That's right you stupid little whore, you're going to be quiet," Jimmy growled as he approached her body on the ground.

Bobbie could only stare off into space. It was as if she were looking down on herself, floating above the gruesome scene. The only thing she could hear as Jimmy roughly kissed her and touched her body. She felt heard the fabric of her dress rip and the sudden blast of cool air against her skin. That was enough to draw her out of the sudden shock. She began to struggle under Jimmy's heavy weight, screaming as loud as she possibly could.

"Just shut up! Shut up!" Jimmy yelled back, smacking her hard across the face.

"Someone help!" Bobbie shouted, twisting her body in an attempt to escape. Her hand hit against the cement wall, and she instinctively began to grasp for something to use in her defense.

Her hand finally clutched a stick lying on the ground next to them. Bobbie's head had only one thought floating in it, she had to stop him now. She managed to bring her arm above her head, Jimmy was obviously preoccupied with his rough groping. When Bobbie brought her hand down with force, his hands stopped immediately.

Jimmy let out a guttural shriek of pain as Bobbie let the stick in his back. He continued to writhe on top of her, angrier than he had been earlier.

"Stupid bitch," Jimmy groaned, as he tried to reach around his back to get the stick out.

Bobbie continued to squirm beneath his weight, desperately trying to get free. She didn't even realize when Jimmy's body was thrown from her own. She blinked and scrambled to her feet, holding her tattered dress around her body, and she ran as fast as she could. She didn't even know where she was going as she ran down the empty street, tears falling down her face for the very first time. She could still hear that damned phone ringing, and for some reason it brought even more tears to her eyes.

Meanwhile back in the alley, Stefan stood above Jimmy, his entire being consumed with anger. In all of his sixteen years as a Cassadine, he had never seen such a horribly brutal thing. He wanted to kill this man immediately, his entire body racking with uncontrollable anger. He took a few moments to calm himself down before reaching out for Jimmy's neck, piercing it at an exact spot.

Jimmy struggled against Stefan's surprisingly strong grip, but eventually succumbed and passed out cold on the concrete. Stefan turned, expecting to see the young girl, but saw that she was gone.

He wasted no time in running out into the street, looking up and down for her, and glimpsing her fleeing body in the distant darkness. He ran after her, hoping to help her, hoping to do something he couldn't quite understand.

Stefan finally did catch up to Bobbie, and reached his hand out to stop her from running. His touch sent Bobbie further into hysterics as she turned around quickly and began to swing wildly, thinking that it was Jimmy once again.

"Please, I mean to help you!" Stefan insisted quietly, catching Bobbie's wrists easily.

She finally stopped struggling and looked up at what she thought was her assailant. She barely placed the kind boy's face from just minutes earlier.

"You're from the restaurant," Bobbie whispered, tears falling from her eyes rapidly.

"You must go to a hospital," Stefan said quietly.

"NO!" Bobbie yelled. "I just want to go home, let me go home!"

She tried to struggle once more, only to have her strength fail her at that moment. Her knees buckled and she was forced to lean into Stefan, who held her up quickly.

"Please, you aren't well," Stefan pleaded gently. "Do not worry about the costs, I can pay for you."

"I have to go home, please take me home!" Bobbie managed to whisper. She looked around desperately, wiping tears from her face. "The phone finally stopped ringing."

"What?" Stefan asked, finding that her ability to stand was decreasing

"A phone was ringing," Bobbie said wearily, slowly blinking. "Now it's not anymore!"

With that, Bobbie completely passed out, falling into a motionless heap in Stefan's arms.

A private hospital room, 36 hours later

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Bobbie's eyes fluttered open and a slight moan escaped her dry lips. She tried to discern where exactly she was, but her head was swimming too much for her to even begin to understand. It felt like she had been sleeping for days. She could see that she was lying in a bed, and there was an IV hooked up to her arm. She looked around the room and recognized that she was in a hospital.

The time on the wall read 10:45 A.M. Bobbie tried to think back to what time it was at the restaurant.

> "Dear God the restaurant," Bobbie gasped. The events of that night floated in her head, Jimmy's hands that boy that she had begged to take her home.<p>

She heard noises right outside of her room, causing her pulse to race even more.

"She should be awake now Mr. Stevens," a resident read off a chart, looking up to associate the name with a face. The teenager in front of him didn't seem like someone that could afford such expert care as well as a private room. But it wasn't his job to answer questions really.

Stefan nodded and said quietly, "Thank you Doctor. I assume that I can go in and see her now?"

"Yes of course."

The door to Bobbie's room creaked open and Stefan walked in timidly. Bobbie immediately shut her eyes tightly, hoping that he would go away and stay at the same time. Stefan sat next to her bedside, surveying her situation.

There were no longer any large, dark circles under her eyes. She looked ten times healthier than she was when she first came in, probably due to the steady IV drip feeding her nutrients. The bruise that had been on her cheek thanks to Jimmy's hand was dwindling down. Stefan hesitantly reached his hand out, wanting to gently touch the satiny smooth porcelain cheek.

Bobbie's eyes immediately flew open and flinched away from his hand.

"Why did you bring me here?" Bobbie demanded angrily.

"You were ill," Stefan stammered, startled by Bobbie's sudden awakening. "You desperately needed medical attention."

"I needed to be left alone," Bobbie snapped, always finding a retreat in anger when life became all too real. "How long have I been here?"

"For thirty-six hours," Stefan managed to get out. "You had to be sedated when I brought you here."

"Why? What happened?" Bobbie asked, genuinely curious.

"You were having, what could only be explained as a traumatic episode," Stefan said quietly, chills running down his spine at the memory.

He had managed to get Bobbie to a hospital, and turned her over to the emergency room. She was lain on a stretcher when she suddenly began screaming out in pain and agony. She was still unconscious, but managed to writhe about on the stretcher, nearly causing herself more pain. And Stefan couldn't bear to think of what she had been screaming. The hospital staff had been gossiping about it for the last day, the blood curdling yells of 'get off of me' and 'leave me alone' were frightening enough for the most experienced ER worker.

"Can you explain that in English?" Bobbie said impatiently.

"You were yelling and had no real control overâ€|your actions while you were unconscious," Stefan said delicately. "It was necessary to give you a sedative, so you could not hurt yourself."

"Don't they need permission to do that?" Bobbie demanded. "They can't just pump me full of drugs without consent."

"I gave them consent," Stefan admitted readily.

"And who the hell are you?" Bobbie yelled.

"I told them that I was your husband," Stefan admitted. Although none of the hospital staff believed that these teenagers where married, it was all they needed with Stefan's offer to pay in cash and Bobbie's precarious health.

"Steven right?" Bobbie asked lowly, remembering his name being said outside her room. She had no way of knowing he used an alias at the hospital so his family could not find him. Stefan did not correct her so she continued, "I want to leave now Mr. Steven. I want out of here."

"You can leave soon," Stefan promised. "The doctors are pleased with the improvement in your health."

"But I want to leave now," Bobbie insisted angrily, ripping the IV out of her arm, only to recoil in pain.

"Are you insistent on hurting yourself Barbara?" Stefan demanded

angrily, grabbing her wrist quickly before she could do anymore damage.

"How did you know my name?" Bobbie demanded.

"On our way to the hospital, I looked through this," Stefan explained quietly, handing her her purse. "You had dropped it in the alleyway."

"I'm out of here," Bobbie muttered, straining to get out of bed.

"I wouldn't leave just yet young lady," a stern voice came from the door. "My name is Dr. Alloys, and you don't get to leave without my consent."

"I can leave anytime I want," Bobbie snapped. "You can't keep me here."

"I can and I will," Dr. Alloys warned. "Now I would like to talk to the two of you, I do not like what I've been seeing in the least. Now young man, according to this sheet it says you are this CHILD'S husband."

> <p>

"Yes," Stefan said dryly, his voice difficult to find.

"I want to know what is going on or I'm going to call the police," Dr. Alloys said sternly. "This girl has been beaten, malnourished, and raped. If you don't start explaining, I will have you arrested."

Stefan's mouth gaped open as he looked back on Bobbie's ashamed face. He felt his blood boiling once again, as he stood by her bed trembling.

"It wasn't Steven," Bobbie croaked out, her voice barely above a whisper. "He just found me in some alleyway and helped me."

"Do you know who it was?" the doctor asked gently.

"Mostly myself I guess," Bobbie laughed. "Look, I'm not that ignorant of a girl, I know my rights. What do I have to do to get out of here?"

Dr. Alloys looked between Bobbie and Stefan, his bravado and anger quickly diminished. He knew that he had to obey the law, even though this girl probably desperately needed his help.

"You have to eat a good meal before you leave," Dr. Alloy said reluctantly. "And I'd like to get you some medication for your psychological episodes."

> <p>

"I don't want any medication," Bobbie insisted quickly. "But I don't mind some breakfast."

Dr. Alloy nodded and left the room with a sigh, another little girl lost story. He would really have to get one of those cushy suburban practices one day, where he didn't have to deal with the grime and reality of the city.

Stefan turned to Bobbie and asked, "I could pay for your medication."

"No thanks Steven," Bobbie said lightly. "You've done plenty. I hope you know I can't pay you back for this."

"I do not care," Stefan said simply. "I wanted to help you."

"You know what I do right?" Bobbie asked blatantly, blushing slightly.

"I'm sorry?" Stefan mumbled. He had put together what Bobbie did to make a living. It made him sick to his stomach to think about it.

"I'm a prostitute," Bobbie said defiantly, although she was clearly ashamed. "So if you know, you want me to pay you back that wayâ€¦I could."

Stefan remained silent, a little taken aback by her suggestion. He opened his mouth to speak, but could not get the words out. He was rescued by Dr. Alloy's return with a tray of breakfast.

> "I want you to eat this, every single bite," Dr. Alloys said sternly.<p>

"Don't have to tell me twice," Bobbie smiled, digging into the juice first for her parched throat.

Stefan felt suddenly out of place. He had been seriously put off by Bobbie's suggestion, it left a bad taste in his mouth to think that she would repay him with sex. He backed out of the room, not knowing what to do with the situation any longer. He was afraid that he may actually take her up on the offer, and that scared the hell out of him.

Bobbie noticed his departure and sighed slightly. She regretted not thanking him properly.

Bobbie's room at the brothel, later that day

"_It's impossible to love and be wise"._ - Francis Bacon

Luke paced the floor once more, checking out the window cautiously. This was getting ridiculous; Bobbie had been gone for almost two days. Big Jimmy had returned to his home yesterday, a serious wound in his back and no information on Bobbie's whereabouts. Luke believed he was going steadily insane. It was his fault if anything happened to his baby sister.

He was the one that had gotten involved with Frank Smith. He was the one who got her Jimmy for the night. Hell he was the one that suggested she take up the oldest profession in the world to begin with. And worst of all he didn't know what to do with his anger. He was immensely angry with himself, and he found that spilling over onto his emotional torment over Bobbie.

The door opened and Bobbie sneaked into the dark room, placing her

purse on the table.

> "Where in the hell have you been?" Luke demanded angrily, wincing inwardly after he heard just how it had come out. This was bound to get ugly.<p>

"Nice to see you too Luke," Bobbie rolled her eyes in disgust. "Thanks for the big date with Jimmy."

"Yeah how did that one go?" Luke asked nonchalantly, always finding humor and anger the best salves for guilt. "I heard it wound up with Big Jimmy limping back to his house with a stick in his back."

"Oh you mean Big Jimmy the coked up insane rapist?" Bobbie snapped. "The one that wanted me to be a pretty little girl one minute and a coke sniffing whore the next. Yeah, I think I stuck some sort of stick in his back when he tried to rape me in an alleyway."

"Well thanks a lot," Luke said dryly, flinching at Bobbie's heart wrenching, angry description. "I'm sure to score big points with the boss because of that."

"Go to hell Luke," Bobbie whispered.

"Barbara Jean, you know I didn't mean it," Luke said quietly.

"Then what did you mean?" Bobbie laughed bitterly.

Luke remained silent as he watched his sister settle back into her tiny, decrepit room. He cleared his throat, almost a form of apologizing for him. His quiet voice filled up the room when he asked, "Where have you been Barbara Jean?"

"Hospital," Bobbie said casually.

"Did he hurt you?" Luke asked, the easy anger rising up in his voice.

"No Luke, someone stopped him and took me to the hospital," Bobbie said sarcastically, looking at her brother with dark, angry eyes. "Someone took care of me for once Luke."

Luke flinched at Bobbie's harsh, true words. He wanted to reach out to her and make things right again, but instead he angrily demanded, "Did he give you money for your services?"

Bobbie choked out a shocked laugh before turning towards her brother, her eyes literally spitting fire. She slapped him hard across the face and whispered venomously, "Get the hell out of my room."

"I'm just asking for the money Barbara Jean," Luke pushed, his entire body trembling with anger. "I seem to remember loaning you some money a couple of days agoâ€|"

"I hate you," Bobbie cried, blinking back angry tears. "Get out."

"Bobbie, I didn't really mean it," Luke said pensively, knowing he had gone to far.

"Get out!" Bobbie growled.

Luke nodded, walking quietly out of her room, leaving her to break down in sobs on her bed.

Meanwhile, in a hotel in Florida

"_A woman can infect the brain, making everything else obsolete or grotesque."_ "Unknown.

"Will you tell me what has made you even more pensive and quiet?" Mikkos ventured a question after staring at his son for over ten minutes.

Stefan looked up, surprised that his father was speaking to him. He had been more pensive in the last day, mostly just thinking about that girl. Barbara Spencer—he made sure that her hospital bill was paid made sure that she had a safe ride home. But he still wanted to see her, make sure she was alive, and sometimes he let himself be truthful, part of him wanted to take him up on her offer.

"I am your father, there are times when I tend to care," Mikkos joked. "Although usually I don't care about your silly little romantic notions."

"I met a woman," Stefan blurted. "A girl really."

"Well!" Mikkos exclaimed, clapping his hands together. "My boy it is about time. I want you and your brother to handpick your women. God forbid you should be forced to live with a woman like your mother—so who is this girl?"

"Do you recall a girl at the restaurant the other night?" Stefan asked. "With red hair."

"The girl you were ogling, I recall," Mikkos nodded. He remembered how frail and helpless she had looked, but also how spectacularly beautiful she was. "What do you plan on doing about it?"

"Nothing," Stefan answered honestly.

"Pine away! How typical of you boy!" Mikkos chuckled. "Perhaps this time you can act on your desires."

"I do not think I can," Stefan sighed.

> "Nonsense," Mikkos insisted, rising from his seat. He pulled a checkbook from the desk and quickly scribbled out a check. "This is for your wooing Stefan. Go cash it right away. And here—the keys to the yacht. I will call the captain and tell him to have it prepared for you. Romance your woman."<p>

Stefan looked at his father in bewilderment. He and Stavros were merely visiting Mikkos for a few weeks in the summer. They were to be shipped back to the island soon enough. Mikkos said it was to keep their mother company, but the boys had a feeling it was to protect their little cousin Alexis.

"Don't worry, just take her out on the sea for a few days," Mikkos assured him. His eyes were twinkling strangely. "A woman that can get that kind of a look on a man's face is worth it."

Stefan took the check and the keys dumbly and looked at them. Mikkos laughed at his son's trepidation as Stavros walked in.

"I retrieved the mail," Stavros announced grandly, as if he deserved some prize for doing something without being asked first. "What's all the laughter?"

"Your brother is infatuated with a woman," Mikkos grinned like an insane Cheshire cat. He took the mail from Stavros and began to sift through it. He held one of the letters close to his heart before ripping it open. "Listen to what little Alexis says of her new tutor: She does not do a good job of keeping me away from Helena."
> <p>

"Poor little guttersnipe," Stavros chuckled. "I suppose we should be going back to Greece soon."

"Not until your brother is done romancing this girl," Mikkos announced.

"My brother romances his own self, not women," Stavros joked.

"Go cash the check with your brother Stefan," Mikkos pushed a still half-cognizant Stefan towards Stavros. "I will call the yacht captain."

"The yacht captain?" Stavros asked as he and Stefan walked down the hall.

"He told me to take her out on the ocean," Stefan mumbled, still only realizing what his father was letting him do.

"He's off his rocker half of the time," Stavros grinned, reveling in the American slang he had picked up from women around town. "Mikkos is a sad old fellow, pining away for love lost."

"He gave me this check," Stefan continued, handing it to Stavros.

"Good lord, what do you need twenty-thousand dollars for?" Stavros practically shouted.

"To romance her," Stefan shrugged.

"I never get paid to romance women," Stavros sulked.

"That's because we don't have that much money," Stefan joked.

"So who is this girl?" Stavros asked after a moment's silence.

"She isâ€|just a girl," Stefan managed to mumble, only now coming to his senses. He cleared his throat and continued quietly, "She is nothing but a common, American woman of poverty."

"Really?" Stavros asked curiously. "This isn't exactly surprising for me when it comes to you. I always knew that you would tread the

beaten path of mixed matches."

"Her entire being seems to elevate her above her status," Stefan continued, deep into his own thoughts. He was explaining his sudden fascination with this child prostitute more to himself than his brother was. "Her eyes are fascinating, they tell me everything about her."

"You should be careful," Stavros said, surprisingly serious.

"Why would you say that?" Stefan asked curiously, taking note of his brother's sudden solemn and wise state.

"You feel things too deeply," Stavros explained. "This common, American woman could take your heart in an instant, and even if she does not break it, I'm sure our mother would."

"It will never go that far," Stefan reassured him. "She will never come with me."

Outside Bobbie's building

—

"Love is just a small word with a huge meaning." -
Anonymous

Stefan looked upon the building with distaste. It was practically falling apart, with dirty aluminum siding, and shutterless filthy windows. He couldn't conceive of this girl, Barbara, existing in such a place. No one would expect such beauty to be in such a low and disgusting place.

He had been surveying the house for fifteen minutes, wanting to go in. Then he would realize exactly what kind of a house it was and retreat back to the street. He hated to think of what went on in there, and he couldn't conceive of that delicate girl doing that. Then he realized that he wanted to, badly, which inspired such guilt to torment him.

He finally took a deep breath and ascended the sunken wooden stairs. Standing in front of the door again gave him a moment of pause. He could still turn around right now; he could save himself the embarrassment. The decision was taken out of his hands however when the door swung open and nearly knocked him over.

Stefan jumped back and looked reproachfully at the exuberant door opener. Bobbie stood in front of him with a surprised look on her face. She never expected to see him again, she was sure that she had completely disgusted him with her offer. She covered her surprise with a coy smile.

"Heya Steven," Bobbie said softly. "You know we really have to stop meeting at doorways."

"It does not bother me," Stefan smiled, he could feel himself fluster already under her smiling gaze.

"What can I do for you?" Bobbie said lightly, although her mind was full of a million trepidations.

"I would like you to go on a trip with me," Stefan blurted, he saw Bobbie's mouth open to say something so he quickly began to say. "I'll pay you if that is what you desire, although I do not want your services, just your company. Please do not ask me what my intentions are, I just want to be around you. Allow me to take you away from this destitute. Let me show you a world that you never knew existed."

Stefan finished his earnest ramblings and expelled a breath he hadn't been aware he was holding. Bobbie was still staring at him, completely thrown off by his request. It was quite possibly the most insane, honest, romantic request she had ever received.

"Will you please come with me?" Stefan asked again quietly. "Any time that you desire, you can take as long as you wish to prepare."

> "Now, let's go now," Bobbie blurted.<p>

"Now?"

"Now, I don't have much to take on a trip," Bobbie said reluctantly, looking down at the clothes she had on. "My good dress, well you know what happened to that oneâ€|"

> "I can buy whatever you may need," Stefan nodded. "You'll come with?"<p>

"You sound surprised money bags," Bobbie laughed. "It's the least I can do after what you did for meâ€|"

"I only did what I felt I needed to," Stefan smiled.

"Yeah, I'll bet you say that to all the girls you rescue," Bobbie grinned. She linked her arm in his and stepped off of the porch. "So Steve, where exactly are we going?"

"Anywhere," Stefan shrugged. "Have you ever been on a boat?"

The Cassadine Yacht

"_I love thee to the level of everyday's most quiet need, by sun and candle light...I love thee with the breath, smiles, tears, of all my life."_ - E.B Browning

Bobbie stepped onto the sunny deck, breathing in the salty air. They had been on the water for two days now, and she had been having the time of her life. The very first thing that she did after accepting Stefan's arm and walking away from her old life was explore the yacht like an excited child. Her exuberance rubbed off on Stefan, who looked at everything with new eyes.

They spent that day planning what they would need with the help of Captain Bailey. Bobbie led Stefan around town that afternoon, spending an unbelievable sum of money. Bobbie's eyes nearly fell out of her head when she saw all the money that Stefan had. He had reluctantly explained that it was a gift from his father, but Bobbie was secretly thinking that he must be a prince. A yacht and twenty

thousand dollars to blow on a hooker didn't seem like an appropriate gift from a father.

That night, Bobbie had nervously tapped her foot through dinner, wondering what the sleeping arrangements would be like. She was accustomed to giving her body to men. She would just detach herself from the entire process, and pick up the money on the way out. One corner of her mind wanted to give him his money's worth, and another didn't want to do anything just yet. She was nervous and scared out of her mind, which was entirely unusual for her.

'Steven' completely surprised her however that night when he ushered her to her room. He opened the door and she stepped into the room timidly, looking around at the lush surroundings.

"Good night," Stefan has said quietly. "If you need anything, do not hesitate to tell me."

"Good night," Bobbie managed to whisper, looking at the door he walked out of and closed in shock.

They had spent two hesitant days with each other, both living as if it were not their own life. The entire time they would talk with one another, getting accustomed to the newness of everything. And despite the shyness and trepidation, they were both having the time of their lives.

> And now Captain Bailey told them that they would dock in Cuba in less than an hour. Bobbie shivered slightly, the cool sea night air starting to blow. In the distance she could see the land that they were going to, just a blur of green and gray for now. She heard footsteps behind her and quickly turned around with a smile.<p>

"It's beautiful," Bobbie whispered.

"You will love Havana," Stefan smiled as he walked next to her, leaning over the railing. "Everything about it is amazingly beautiful, the stone churches, the beaches, the people."

"When did you go last?" Bobbie asked quietly, looking back out in the distance once he reached her side.

"I've never actually been there," Stefan smiled. "I've read about it though."

"You're amazing," Bobbie laughed. "Okay, where else have you read about, never been to, but no all about?"

Stefan pursed his lips thoughtfully before saying seriously, "I've read that China is quite exotic and beautiful all through the year."

"I was joking," Bobbie giggled before looking back over the ocean.

Stefan shrugged sheepishly, stealing a glance at her smiling face. A smile really made her even more exquisite, lighting up her dark eyes with joy. He was slightly proud he could make her smile.

Bobbie turned to Stefan thoughtfully, catching him staring at her. She smiled again slightly before asking, "Are you having a good time?"

"Excuse me?" Stefan frowned. Then a smile escaped on his face and he nodded emphatically, "I'm enjoying myself immensely—are you?"

"Don't you know?" Bobbie asked curiously. "When you said a whole world I've never seen before you really meant it—I've never felt so alive and safe—and happy in my entire life. It's scaring me."

"You shouldn't be scared of happiness," Stefan said thoughtfully. "You deserve it."

"Well I don't know about deserving it, but I don't mind getting it," Bobbie smiled. "Do you honestly know what you've given me?"

"I just asked you to accompany me," Stefan said humbly. "It was more for my benefit than yours."

"Whichever, but you've given me this glimpse at a different life, something I could have one day," Bobbie said with excitement. "You've given me everything."

The pair remained silent for a few more moments, each looking out into the ocean. Bobbie couldn't help but feel like there was something left unsaid, she turned to him, realizing only now how dangerously close their bodies were. She stared brazenly at his body, the lean, muscular form, the tanned skin of his chest visible from the few top buttons he neglected to button. She gazed up to his chiseled face, as the sun played on his features, glinting in the depths of his blue eyes.

"You know I've never been touched the way you touch me," Bobbie whispered in a low voice, bringing Stefan's attention back to her.

"I've never touched you," Stefan said quietly, mesmerized by her beautiful face.

"I know," Bobbie whispered, bringing a hand up to his face, her finger tracing the line of his chin, amazed at the bolts of electricity that ran through her body.

Stefan grasped her hand in his, bringing it to his lips. He pressed them against her hand gently, never breaking his gaze with hers. Bobbie was overwhelmed; it was as if she had never been kissed before. She stood rooted to the floor as Stefan's lips slowly descended upon her own, holding them in a state of bliss. She closed her eyes and drank the moment in never feeling so cherished before in her life—

A few days later, a metropolitan store in Cuba

"First love is only a little foolishness and a lot of curiosity" - George Bernard Shaw

"I can't believe they have these kinds of things here," Bobbie said disbelievingly, looking around the large, very American store.

"This isn't exactly a third world country," Stefan mused. "I don't see what we would need here anywayâ€|"

> "You have been dressing me like a doll for the past week," Bobbie said in mock indignant tone, looking down at her beautiful summery dress appreciatively. "It's my turn now."<p>

"There is nothing wrong with the way I dress," Stefan said reproachfully.

"There is nothing wrong with the way I dress," Bobbie mocked, then let out a laugh. "You're sixteen years old. You dress like you're forty."

"I will not wear one of those," Stefan insisted, staring at a hideous polyester suit.

"Okay I want you to dress like the normal sixteen year old boy I know you can pretend to be," Bobbie insisted. "You don't need to dress like you're forty and you don't need to dress like you're a pimp either."

"Then what would you have me wear," Stefan asked, looking down at his button down shirt and pressed khaki pants.

"Maybe we can start with blue jeans," Bobbie said thoughtfully. Her eye caught a small restaurant type affair and she gasped, "That isn't what I think it is, is it?"

Stefan followed her pointing finger and shrugged, "McDonalds?"

"You have got to try their French fries," Bobbie squealed dragging him along.

"Excuse me Barbara," Stefan said with a deceptively serious tone. "Are you trying to Americanize me?"

Bobbie turned to him with a guilty expression. "You don't want to be Americanized?"

Stefan smiled and drew Bobbie to him. He kissed her softly on the lips, forgetting they were in the middle of a public place and whispered, "Americanize as much as you wish."

Later that day

"Do you realize that there are an unbelievable amount of books in the world?" Bobbie asked thoughtfully, sorting through a stack of them with obvious interest. "And I've read a grand total of two of them I think."

"I've read too many of them I think," Stefan said, in a half apologetic tone. "But still I can not hope to read everything."

The two of them had finished their clothing shopping and even eating

the French fries, before they found an ancient old bookstore. They had been there ever since, exploring the nooks and crannies. And although they didn't know it, they provided immense entertainment for the elderly owner when they would sneak into a corner and share a kiss or two.

"I like the older ones," Bobbie said quietly, her hands delicately inspecting a leather bound book with old, yellow pages. "This one has the worst spellingâ€|"

Stefan looked over her shoulder and smiled when he recognized the poem.

"It's a poem, a Scottish poem I believe," Stefan explained. He recited the poem quietly, his voice filling the tiny corner that he and Bobbie inhabited.

"Oh my love's like a red red rose
That's newly sprung in June
Oh my love's like a melody
That's sweetly played in tune
As fair art thou, my bonnie lass
So deep in love am I
I will love thee still my dear
Till all the seas gone dry
As fair art thou my dear
So deep in love am I
And I will love thee still my dear
Till all the seas gone dry
I will love thee still my dear
While the sands of life shall run
Till the seas gone dry my dear
And rocks melt with the sun
As fair art thou my bonnie lass
So deep in love am I
I will come again my love
Though it were ten thousand mile
I will come again"

"It's lovely," Bobbie smiled, turning to face Stefan.

"You are lovely," Stefan corrected, pulling her to him for yet another sweet kiss.

A local restaurant in Cuba, a week later

—
_ "Heav'n hath no rage like love to hatred turn'd, Nor Hell a fury, like a woman scorn'd."_ - William Congreve

Bobbie squirmed happily in her seat, waiting for Stefan to come back to their table. She had ordered him a drink and was hoping that he would like it. She looked around the crowded, smoky club, not really believing this was her life.

She was in a different country, in a beautiful dress, surrounded by exotic people who thought that she must be royalty. And she was with a man who didn't treat her like royalty, and he didn't treat her like a whore. She was his equal, he respected her. It was something she had never experienced before.

And all of this without any sex at all. For Bobbie, sex didn't have meaning to it, besides Luke, she had never been around a man who didn't want to have sex with her. She was perfectly happy to be around 'Steven'. But she couldn't help but feel something was missing. The only thing she really knew about the act of sex was brutality and indifference.

Her mind couldn't conceive of a different kind of intimacy. If she could articulate her thoughts to herself, she would know that she wanted to make love with him.

Stefan sat at the table with a smile, surveying Bobbie's happiness. The waiter brought them their drinks, and the band began to play a loud tango.

"Do you wish to dance?" Stefan asked with amusement, as Bobbie wriggled in her seat slightly.

> "Sure, you know I charge extra for that right?" Bobbie joked. She leapt up from her seat and pulled him onto the dance floor. "I bet you didn't know I could tango. I learnt from old movies when I was a kidâ€|"<p>

Bobbie continued to tell him about how she learnt to tango, but Stefan wasn't really listening. His mind was replaying what he thought was a serious comment. Charging extra, he wondered if that was Bobbie's way of reminding him of his promise to pay her. Youthful foolishness convinced him that Barbara was only with him for money, and he felt cheated suddenly.

"You know you don't make that great of a dance partner," Bobbie complained as she tried to move along with Stefan's stiffness.

"I apologize," Stefan muttered, forgetting the compounding trouble he was creating for himself. He paid more attention to the dancing, tangoing very well with Bobbie, and thrilling her on the dance floor.

"That's much better," Bobbie giggled once they finished, going back to their table. She sat down and asked, "So what are we going to eat tonight."

> Stefan shrugged, digging into his pocket. He took out all the bills he had, throwing them on the table.<p>

"This is all the money that I have with me at the moment," Stefan said coldly. "I can give you the rest when we return to the boat."

"What is this for?" Bobbie asked quietly, picking up the money curiously.

> "That is your payment," Stefan muttered. "Its what you wanted to come with, is it not?"<p>

"What has gotten into you?" Bobbie whispered, throwing the money down as if she had been burned.

"I just remembered the terms to which I offered when we left Florida," Stefan said quietly. "I promised to pay you."

"I never wanted your money," Bobbie said lowly, her eyes darkening dangerously. "I never once asked you for your damn money."

"That is what you do," Stefan shrugged. "You take money for yourâ€|"

"You bastard!" Bobbie hissed. "All this time I thought you would never treat me like that, I thought you were different because you never would do that."

Stefan remained silent, staring at the tabletop. He couldn't help but feel like something was slipping away from him uncontrollably. He wondered what could have possibly made him so foolish.

"Look at me!" Bobbie demanded, nearly flinching when his blue eyes met hers. Her hands flew to the buttons of her dress, unbuttoning one by one. "Do you want your money's worth now? Why stop treating me like a whore now? Do you want me right here, or back at the yacht?"

> <p>

"Barbara don't," Stefan whispered, reaching over the table and stopping her hands. He slowly rebuttoned the top of her dress as tears slid down her cheeks.

Bobbie swatted his hands away, "You don't know me at all."

She rose from the table quickly, looking back at the money on the table.

"This is what I think of your money," she whispered venomously before she spat on the bills on the table. She turned on her heels and ran from the restaurant.

Stefan sat in shock for a split second before running after her, only now coming to his senses. He saw her running towards the beach, her form outlined in the moonlight. He caught up to her easily, calling out her name.

She turned around viciously, wiping tears from her eyes.

"What are you trying to do?" Bobbie demanded. "What was that little performance in there? Did you want to see how much I cared about you? Did you want to see what I would do?"

"I'm sorry, I was not thinking," Stefan said desperately. "I WAS thinking, my mind was playing tricks with me. You must believe me Barbara that I did not mean to insult you."

"I don't want your money," Bobbie said defiantly. She took a deep breath and took a few steps towards him before stopping again. "I could never take your money, I don't want it becauseâ€¦I feel so much when you're around. I don't ever want to make that wrong by taking your money."

Stefan took the final steps towards her, his hands reaching out and taking a gentle hold on her face. His lips crashed down on hers, desperately wanting to make everything right. She opened her mouth to him, letting her breath get taken away. Her hands rested against his chest, moving slowly up and down his chest.

When he finally pulled away she looked up at him, scared at how fast her heart was beating.

"I love you," she whispered, surprised at how peaceful her voice sounded.

Stefan responded by wrapping his arms around her waist, pulling her close. He kissed her forehead and said quietly, "I love you Barbara."

They kissed again, with even more passion than the last. Bobbie's knees buckled and caused both of them to kneel in the sand. Her hands stopped rifling through his hair and went to her dress, slowly unbuttoning it. Stefan recognized what she was doing and he pulled away from the kiss.

Bobbie saw his hesitation and smiled slightly.

"I really want this," she whispered huskily.

Stefan smiled as well, kissing her gently as they lay back in the sand. They both really wanted this.

The yacht, a week later

—

"To love is to be vulnerable to pain." â€" Unknown

Stefan glanced down at Bobbie's sleeping form. When they came back to the yacht after making love on the beach, she had followed him to his room and fell asleep in his arms. It felt right, to have her with him when he went to bed and when he woke up in the morning. He honestly

couldn't remember what it was like to not have her near him.

She looked peaceful and happy. Her face nearly glowed with an exuberant joy. He glanced in the mirror above the dresser as he dressed quietly. Her expression was mirrored on his own face. He would give anything to stay with her forever. And the thought that they had been together for nearly three weeks was kind of dichotomous. He could not comprehend how time could move so quickly, yet it felt like he had been with her forever.

The thought of calling his brother today was a bitter one. He didn't want to go back to the world where he was the second prince. He wanted to stay with Barbara.

Stefan bent next to her on the bed and kissed her cheek softly.

"Barbara?" he said quietly. "I shall return soon, I have to make a phone call."

Bobbie mumbled something incoherently and rolled over in the bed. Stefan smiled and walked out of the room, making his way to a phone on the land. He walked slowly, enjoying the damp morning, the gray skies in direct contrast with the lush green surroundings. He was planning to take Bobbie to the stone ruins of a church today, it was considered one of the most beautiful places on earth, or at least that is what he read.

He made the collect call and waited for his brother to accept the charges.

"Stavros?" Stefan asked over the phone. He laughed slightly and said loudly, "Why didn't you tell me women could be so wonderful?"

"Keep that thought in your head when I tell you this," Stavros said quietly. "Mother has been asking for you."

"Why?" Stefan asked, his mood deflating instantly.

"She's angry Stefan," Stavros said reluctantly. "I think she's suspicious and father really isn't helping matters along."

"Must he torment her constantly?" Stefan asked in exasperation. He didn't care about his mother really, only the threat she posed to his happiness.

"She wants us to go home, immediately," Stavros announced. He said in a kinder voice, "I'm sorry Stefan."

"As am I," Stefan said quietly. "I will be home before the end of the week."

Stefan made his reluctant way back to the yacht. He had no idea how he was going to tell Barbara that their time together was up. He couldn't quite convince himself of the fact as of yet. When he opened the door to his room, he saw that Bobbie had woken up and gotten into the shower. He sat back on the bed, waiting for her to get finished.

She finally stepped out of the tiny bathroom, a towel wrapped around

her while she patted her hair dry with another.

"Good morning," she chirped happily. "I had the strangest thought when I was taking my shower. Where does the water go on a boat? I mean, does the shower water just go directly into the sea or what?"

Bobbie stopped her happy chatter when she noticed that Stefan's face was grave and solemn.

"What is it?" she asked quietly, sitting next to him on the bed.
"What happened?"

"We must leave to go back to Florida," Stefan whispered.

Bobbie was taken aback by the announcement, she bit her lip and asked, "Why? Did I do something?"

"No, it's a decision out of both of our hands," Stefan explained.

"Oh," Bobbie nodded, not quite believing him.

"My family wants me back," Stefan explained lamely. "I can not defy them."

"That's okay," Bobbie nodded. "When do we leave?"

"We can leave tomorrow," Stefan suggested. "Perhaps spend one more night here before returning."

"Sounds good to me," Bobbie smiled, putting on her brave face. He would be returning to his family, whereas she would return to desolation.

The yacht, the next day

"Immature love says, 'I love you because I need you.' Mature love says, 'I need you because I love you.'" - Erich Fromm

"Is everything ready down there?" Captain Bailey called down. He had enjoyed a rather nice three-week vacation in Cuba while leaving the young lovebirds to their fun. He was almost as reluctant as Bobbie and Stefan about leaving.

"I believe so Captain!" Stefan called back, looking into the room where Bobbie had everything strewn about. She had managed to stall the process of leaving the docks three times, claiming to have needed on different occasions, a new dress, aspirin and to Stefan's embarrassment, unmentionables. She even had Captain Bailey pose for a picture in front of the boat, using a passerby's Polaroid camera.

"Wait wait wait!" Bobbie called out. She looked up at Stefan with a guilty expression and said, "I forgot to get some sand!"

"Why do you need sand?" Stefan asked curiously.

"A keepsake," Bobbie shrugged. "Just something to remember this by."

Stefan curbed his frustration and led her out of the cabin.

"Captain Bailey, we shall be only a moment longer," Stefan apologized as he lowered the plank once again. He dragged Bobbie along to the nearby sandy beach and displayed it for her with his hands, "All the sand you could possibly want."

"I forgot something to carry it with," Bobbie said meekly, then broke out in a smile. She frowned when Stefan impatiently grabbed a handful of sand and shoved it into his pockets. He was ready to return to the yacht when Bobbie said, "one more thing."

"You can not possibly be serious," Stefan sighed.

"I want that book, the one with the Scottish poem," Bobbie said pleadingly. "We can go to the store quickly and be back in no time at all."

"I do not find this amusing Barbara!" Stefan said angrily. "The first time you forgot something important was amusing, but it fails to be humorous any longer."

"Well excuse me if I like to pay attention the finer details of life!" Bobbie shouted defensively.

"No one can consider sand a finer detail of life," Stefan laughed.

"I just don't want to leave this magical place," Bobbie said quietly.

"Why?" Stefan pondered. "This is just a place—it will always be with you."

"Must you ask why I don't want to go?" Bobbie demanded, her temper flaring. "You get to go home to a family, and being your princely self. You'll find other women that will love you and sleep with you. And I get to go back to Florida, I get to go back to that goddamned house and life that horrible life. Do you know what you've done? You've shown me this amazing paradise and let me get used to it—what am I going to do now when I have to let strangers into my room and touch me in ways I only want you to touch me!"

Stefan looked down at his hands, then up at Bobbie's tear-filled eyes. "You will never live that life again, I promise you."

"You can't promise me anything," Bobbie whispered. "You're not going to be there to stop the next Jimmy in an alleyway!"

"I will come back to you, I promise you that," Stefan said desperately. "I will find a way to get back to you."

"Just hurry okay?" Bobbie smiled through her tears. "Because I don't want to go back to what I used to be—I want to stay the way I am when I'm with you."

Stefan enveloped Bobbie in his arms, holding her head to his chest. A

song began blaring from a nearby boat, filtering over to Bobbie and Stefan's place in the sand. They began to sway slightly and Bobbie giggled.

"Would you like to try the tango again?" she smiled, looking up at him with hopeful eyes. "If I didn't know you better I would think you were trying to stall the inevitable!"

Greece, nearly a month later

"_We are never so defenseless against suffering as when we love, never so forlornly unhappy as when we have lost our love object or its love."_ - Sigmund Freud

Stefan and Stavros returned to Greece to their mother, not before swindling their father out of money and setting up a resource for Bobbie secretly. Stefan knew that Bobbie would never go back to prostitution, she would rather die first. So he managed to get her enough money to live comfortably for the time being.

The night they returned from the states, their mother had welcomed them enthusiastically. She did her best to stare Stefan down, asking him questions about his trip. He had answered them vaguely, which only raised her suspicions more. Then the next day, he made a large mistake.

He had approached his mother earnestly, and told her quietly, "Mother, I wish to marry."

Helena looked at him in surprise, before coming to her senses. "And who may I ask do you wish to marry at the age of sixteen?"

"I met a girl in America," Stefan explained. "I love her."

"Is this what your father meant when he said you had better taste and sense than he did?" Helena laughed bitterly. "Yes I actually listen to your father's insane ramblings."

> <p>

"What did he tell you?" Stefan asked, wondering just how much his father knew about Barbara.

"Enough my little boy," Helena smiled, sending chills down Stefan's spine. "You shall join me tonight for dinner, and we shall discuss your sudden need to get married."

Stefan did as he was told, meeting his mother for dinner. He was surprised when another female guest was seated at the table. A young girl from the mainland, Stefan presumed.

Helena's guests were relatively quiet when the wine was served.

> <p>

"Drink up girl," Helena smiled at the young woman sitting uncomfortably.

The girl drank, eager to please Mrs. Cassadine. Helena caught Stefan's wary gaze and held it, a look of pure venom on her face. Stefan's blood ran cold when he heard the thump of the girl's head hitting the table.

He rushed over to her and checked for a pulse, finding none.

"You've killed her," Stefan whispered, picking up the wineglass and noticing the residue through the blood red liquid.

"She was a whore, she gave her body to men for money," Helena explained quietly. Her voice rose however as she rose and approached Stefan. "You know what that is Stefan, do you not? I just want to make it perfectly clear that I can kill other whores and prostitutes. I've done it beforeâ€¦"

"You are pure evil," Stefan muttered, inching away from his mother. Her implications were perfectly clear, and it made Stefan's blood boil with despair and anger.

"I am only looking out for your best interests," Helena smiled. "I'm so glad that we understand each other once more Stefan."

"I understand that you want to be the only whore in this family," Stefan muttered, ignoring the hurt look cross Helena's face. He turned away in anger, desperation filled his soul, and he had to get away from her.

Meanwhile, in Florida

Bobbie had returned to her shabby room, to her inquisitive brother with a heavy heart a month ago. She made the announcement that she would no longer turn tricks, and Luke became suspicious. She was getting money for nothing, from out of no where. She was strangely expectant and happy. A completely different Bobbie.

She was keeping a secret from Luke, other than her month with Steven. She went to the hospital earlier that day, with happy, but scared heart. When she came back, Luke was sitting in her room, smoking a cigar.

"I really have to thank you for these," Luke smiled, puffing on the fat Cuban cigar. "I just have one question, how in the world did you get the money to buy these, and what were you doing in Cuba?"

"Don't you have some mob delivery to do?" Bobbie asked sarcastically.

"Seriously Barbara Jean," Luke held the cigar in his hands, looking at his sister with concern. "If you're involved in something bad, just tell me and I'll help fix it."

"It's not bad Luke," Bobbie smiled. "I guess you just never saw me happyâ€¦"

"Skittish is more like it," Luke laughed. "So what were you doing in Cuba?"

"Falling in love," Bobbie grinned. She looked at the box Luke had just invaded with curiosity. "Where did you get those anyway?"

"A box was delivered for you while you were out," Luke announced. "Some sand and a book I think. It came from Cuba."

"A book?" Bobbie smiled. She dug into the box and pulled out the leather bound book with the faded yellow pages. She smelt it briefly, transporting herself back in time.

Luke watched his sister's peculiar behavior, and was amused when she got teary eyed.

"It's just a book Barbara Jean," Luke laughed.

> "It's not just a book Luke, and those aren't just cigars," Bobbie snapped. "They're culture and intelligence andâ€| "<p>

"And cigars, books and sand," Luke mocked.

"There are other worlds than this Luke!" Bobbie yelled. "There's more than Frank Smith and the mob and a damned brothel. There are other ways to see the world!"

"Okay, okay," Luke held up his hands in surrender. "I give, there are other things in this world besides me, but they aren't as important."

"You're horrible," Bobbie smiled as the phone rang. She picked it up and said, "Hello? Hi Dr. Alloys! Oh. Oh my God. NO! No, I don't want to do that. Can I? Thank you so muchâ€|"

"Doctor?" Luke raised an eyebrow after Bobbie hung up the phone. She turned to him with a flushed face.

"I'm pregnant," Bobbie whispered, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. The only thing that she could think was that he had to come back now, he just had to.

"Oh Barbara Jean," Luke sighed. He rubbed his eyes tediously before looking at her seriously. "I can get the money together, we can take you to a clinic or something."

"NO!" Bobbie practically yelled. "No, Luke I won't do thatâ€|"

"Bobbie there's not much else you can do," Luke said quietly.

"I won't kill this baby," Bobbie said resolutely, holding a hand over her stomach.

"Then you had better figure out something Barbara," Luke said angrily. "You can't support yourself, much less a baby."

Luke breezed out of the room, leaving an emotional Bobbie behind. She laughed first, and then her eyes welled up with tears. She looked into the box that had just arrived, sifting the sands between her fingers when the phone rang again. Bobbie rushed to pick it up, having a feeling about who it was.

"Hello?" Bobbie said breathlessly. There was no answer on the other end, but she could hear breathing on the other end.

Stefan listened to Bobbie's voice on the other end of the line, wanting to tell her so many things. He had to break his promise, and

never see her again.

"Is that you Steven?" Bobbie asked with a crack in her voice. "I have news, you have to come back now, right awayâ€|I'm pregnant Steven. You have to come and get me."

Stefan looked at the phone in shock. Tears welled up in his eyes at the helpless situation he was in. He could do nothing but slowly hang up the phone, feeling as if he were losing his very soul at the sudden loss of Barbara's voice.

"Hello? Steven pleaseâ€|" Bobbie sobbed, holding the phone to her ear until she heard a dial tone. She let the phone slid to the floor, trying to calm herself down. She picked up the leather bound book and opened it, searching for that poem.

She placed a hand over her flat stomach, reading the poem quietly, finding that it calmed her down considerably. In the space of a few seconds, she had given up hope for her future, for a future with Steven. She could only hope that she could give this baby the happiness that eluded her.

"I will love thee still my dear
While the sands of life shall run
Till the seas gone dry my dear
And rocks melt with the sun
As fair art thou my bonnie lass
So deep in love am I
I will come again my love
Though it were ten thousand mile
I will come again"

End
file.